

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 TRSE-00 /070 W
-----021951Z 097312 /47

R 021904Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2343
INFO ALL EC CAPITALS
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 12857

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PLAB, FR
SUBJECT: A TROUBLED MAY BEGINS

1. SUMMARY: USHERED IN BY A LARGE CGT-DOMINATED
MAY DAY PARADE, WITH A HEAVY ANTI-GOVERNMENT FLAVOR,
MAY PROMISES TO BE "HOT" ON THE UNION SCENE. END
SUMMARY.

2. PARIS' TRADITIONAL MAY DAY PARADE WAS UNDETERRED
BY BAD WEATHER. THOUSANDS OF LEFTIST MARCHERS MADE
THEIR WAY TO CITY HALL TO PAY THEIR SYMBOLIC
"RESPECTS" TO THE CITY'S NEWLY ELECTED MAYOR, GAULLIST
LEADER JACQUES CHIRAC. CONTINGENTS REPRESENTING
WHAT SEEMED TO BE EVERY MILITANT GROUP EXTANT (IN-
CLUDING THE IRA) TOOK PART. HOWEVER, THE COMMUNIST-
LED CGT, WHOSE ORGANIZATIONAL AND FINANCIAL HAND
WAS EVERYWHERE EVIDENT, KEPT THE GROUPS IN ORDER
AND MOVING.

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3. GIVEN THE HIGH DEGREE OF CGT CONTROL AND PARTICIPA-
TION (ALTHOUGH ITS ALLY, THE CFDT, WAS THERE AND
MADE A BETTER SHOWING THAN IT DID IN THE APRIL 28
MARCH), THE MAIN THRUST OF THE DAY'S SLOGANS AND
DEMONSTRATIONS WERE DIRECTED TOWARDS THE GOVERNMENT'S
ECONOMIC POLICIES AND IN PARTICULAR CALLED FOR THE
END TO AUSTERITY AND THE PROTECTION OF "TRADE UNION

LIBERTIES." (SEE PARIS 06980 AND 07220 FOR THE FIRST APPEARANCES OF THAT LATTER THEME WHICH HAS REPLACED THE NON-STARTER ON SOCIAL SECURITY.) IT WAS ALSO INTERESTING TO NOTE THE HEAVY AND VOCIFEROUS SPANISH REPUBLICAN PARTICIPATION, COMPLETE WITH NUMEROUS, LARGE AND OBVIOUSLY VERY NEW REPUBLICAN FLAGS. THE CHIEF CROWD PLEASERS, HOWEVER, WERE: THE AFRICAN DANCERS WHO, IN TRIBAL DRESS, LED THE CGT GARBAGEMEN'S CONTINGENT (THAT UNION IS ON THE 12TH DAY OF A PATENTLY ANTI-CHIRAC STRIKE), THE CGT POLICEMEN (ALL 30 OF THEM), AND SOME 200 (DRAMATICALLY HOODED) UNIFORMED SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AND AIRMEN. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE DAY'S EVENTS, CGT GENERAL SECRETARY SEGUY EXPRESSED HIS SATISFACTION, AND CONFIDENTLY PREDICTED THAT IF THE GOVERNMENT FAILED TO COME TO TERMS, ALL THE UNIONS IN FRANCE WOULD UNITE ON MAY 17 FOR ANOTHER DAY OF ACTION (SEE PARIS 12698).

4. SEGUY IS NOT MAKING IDLE THREATS. THE GOVERNMENT'S APPARENT COMBINATION OF RIGIDITY IN ITS ECONOMIC POLICIES AND INTERNAL DISARRAY HAS HAD A PROFOUND EFFECT IN UNION CIRCLES. (CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR COLLAPSED ON APRIL 30 WHEN ALL 7 UNIONS PULLED OUT IN THE FACE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S REFUSAL TO IMPROVE ITS OFFERS.) WITH THE CFDT FIRMLY WITH HIM, SEGUY IS TAKING SKILLFUL ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION TO PRESSURE THE OTHER UNIONS TO JOIN IN AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT FRONT. THE TWO UNIONS MOST EXPOSED TO HIS PRESSURES, AT THIS TIME, ARE THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TEACHERS FEDERATION (FEN) AND THE FO.

5. THE FEN, EVEN BEFORE THE APRIL 28 MARCH (SEE PARIS 12528) HAD MADE PUBLIC NOISES TO THE EFFECT THAT WERE IT CONSULTED, IN ADVANCE, ABOUT THE DATE; AND WERE THE PROPOSED ACTIVITIES NOT CONFINED TO THE PUBLIC SECTOR, THEN IT TOO WOULD BE WILLING TO JOIN RANKS AGAIN WITH ITS CGT AND CFDT ALLIES FROM THE MUNICIPAL ELECTION DAYS IN SOME COMMON PROTEST ACTION. THE CGT-CFDT RESPONSE WAS TO HAVE THEIR METAL FEDERATIONS SET A 4-HOUR NATIONAL STRIKE FOR MAY 17, WHICH SEGUY THEN ADOPTED AS THE DATE ON WHICH THE NEXT ACTION WOULD FOLLOW IF THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT NEGOTIATE. IT WAS HARDLY ADVANCE NOTICE, BUT IT IS A GUARANTEE THAT ANY ACTION CALLED FOR THAT DATE WILL NOT BE CONFINED TO THE PUBLIC SECTOR. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF THE FEN WILL GO ALONG. THEY ARE CURRENTLY MEETING WITH THE CGT AND CFDT AND ADVISING THE WORLD THAT THEY HAVE BEEN ASSURED BY THOSE TWO ORGANIZATIONS

THAT NO ACTION HAS BEEN CALLED FOR MAY 17. THAT

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NO ACTION HAS YET BEEN CALLED IS TECHNICALLY TRUE.
SEGUY DID SAY HE WOULD GIVE THE GOVERNMENT TWO OR
THREE WEEKS TO START NEGOTIATING BEFORE CALLING FOR
ANOTHER DAY OF ACTION. IT IS A SMALL FIG LEAF, BUT
IT MAY BE ALL THAT IS LEFT TO FEN.

6. MAY 17 IS ALSO AFTER THE FO CONVENTION AT VICHY,
AND SERVES TO UNDERSCORE THE SUBLTY OF THE CGT MOVES.
ON THE EVE OF ITS CONGRESS, THE ANTI-COMMUNIST FO
FINDS ITSELF CONFRONTED WITH A DILEMMA. TO IT,
THE BARRE PLAN HAS EFFECTIVELY UNDERCUT COLLECTIVE
BARGAINING, THAT ALTERNATIVE TO PARTISAN POLITICAL
ACTION WHICH IS THE FO'S RAISON D'ETRE. THE BULK
OF THE FO'S MEMBERSHIP, SOCIALIST BY POLITICS, VIEW
THE GOVERNMENT WITH INCREASING AGGRAVATION AND
CONTEMPT. THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE OF THE POWERFUL
CIVIL SERVANTS FEDERATION, WHOSE PRESIDENT HAS
TOLD US THAT HIS MEMBERSHIP IS IN AN UGLY MOOD.
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DEMANDS FOR ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTION IS CERTAIN TO SURFACE AT VICHY, AND FO LEADER BERGERON HAS ALREADY HAD A MEETING -- REPORTEDLY THE FIRST IN FOUR YEARS -- WITH SOCIALIST PARTY LEADER MITTERRAND.

7. HOWEVER, HERE AGAIN THE QUESTION OF PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION IS IMPORTANT. THE COMBATIVENESS, THE WILLINGNESS TO STRIKE, APPEARS CONFINED PRIMARILY TO THE WORKERS IN THE PUBLIC AND NATIONALIZED SECTORS WHO HAVE SECURE JOBS AND RELATIVELY GOOD PAY. THE MOOD IS QUITE DIFFERENT AMONGST THOSE IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR, AND THERE IS A GENERAL CONSENSUS AMONGST IMPARTIAL OBSERVERS THAT THERE, A GENERAL STRIKE CALL WOULD FAIL. ONLY IN SELECTED INDUSTRIES, WHERE THERE IS EITHER NEAR TOTAL CONTROL BY ONE UNION (E.G., THE CGT ON THE DOCKS) OR IN STEEL, WHERE THERE IS A MAJOR PROBLEM COMMON TO ALL THE WORKERS, IS THERE ANY LIKELIHOOD FOR SUCCESS. THUS, ANY PUSH FOR HARD ACTION BY THE FO CIVIL SERVANTS AT VICHY WILL BE RESISTED BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR UNIONS, AT LEAST ONE OF WHOM MAY BOYCOTT THE CONGRESS.

8. WHAT WE ARE SEEING, THEN, IS A CGT EFFORT TO DRAW THE FEN TEACHERS AND AT LEAST THE FO CIVIL SERVANTS INTO A MAY 17 ANTI-GOVERNMENT SPECTACULAR, WITH ONGOING POTENTIAL. WITH THE CGT'S CONTROL OVER THE ELECTRICITY AND GAS TO GIVE ANY STRIKE CALL AN INVOLUNTARY MULTIPLIER EFFECT THROUGHOUT THE ECONOMY, AND THE LARGE PERCENTAGE OF GOVERNMENT WORKERS REPRESENTED BY THE FEN AND FO, SEGUY COULD NOT ONLY DISRUPT FRENCH LIFE BUT COME CLOSE TO CLOSING DOWN THE GOVERNMENT AS WELL. THE CGT IS PLAYING FOR HIGH STAKES, AND SEEMS VERY CONFIDENT OF ITSELF, AS BEFITS AN ORGANIZATION WHICH NOW CLAIMS TO HAVE HAD DELEGATION IN THE U.S. IN MARCH (NO DETAILS AVAILABLE YET), AND HAS ACCEPTED AN INVITATION TO SEND ANOTHER

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IN SEPTEMBER (PARIS 12669).
GAMMON

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Message Attributes

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